

Why did the Constitutional Monarchy fail in France by August 1792?

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CLASS DIFFERENCES AND PRESSURE FOR SANS CULOTTES

Fall inevitable, Marxist view

Nobility, urban workers and peasants had worked together effectively by 1789. However natural class differences began to emerge more strongly. The bourgeoisie sought to halt the revolution once they had achieved their aims but sans culottes and peasants drove the revolution in a more radical direction.

Development of 'sans culottes mentality'. Used revolutionary violence to drive Revolution in a more radical direction. Storming of the Bastille, October Days, journee of June 10th 1792 and the insurrection of August 1792 are all examples of this use of revolutionary violence. Sans culotte supplied the revolutionary dynamic which overthrew the King and gave power to the people.

IDEAS AND RHETORIC OF THE REVOLUTION

Fall inevitable, Post Revisionist view

Ideas of the revolutionaries were important, as well as the National Assembly's willingness to turn a blind eye to violence if that helped their cause. Revolutionaries influenced by the ideas of Rousseau and his ideas of unity and the General Will. Unity was vital and there was no dissent among supporters. Those who disagreed were deemed as being against the Revolution.

The King's use of veto was seen as counter - revolutionary. It was easy to believe there was an aristocratic conspiracy and that the King was a part of it. Contradiction in the Constitution which emphasised liberty and equality and still sought to retain a hereditary monarchy and it was bound to come undone at some point.

KING'S OPPOSITION FROM START

Fall inevitable, David Andress' view

The Constitutional Monarchy could only have worked if the King believed in it. Reaction to the forming of the National Assembly, the August Decrees, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the October Days all show that he never really supported the Revolution. Occasionally pretended to, as during the Fete de la Federation in June 1790.

Immediately after agreeing the National Assembly in June 1789 he was planning a coup. Just days after agreeing to the demands made to him in the October Days he was writing to the Spanish King telling him that he rejected all changes that had occurred. When he fled Paris in the Flight to Varennes he left a letter declaring he had never believed in the Revolution.

FALL WAS NOT INEVITABLE, IT HAD POTENTIAL BUT FAILED DUE TO A NUMBER OF FACTORS. (REVISIONIST)

REFORMS TO THE CHURCH AND CLERGY

National Assembly needlessly brought in a policy which completely divided the nation and turned previous supporters into 'enemies' or 'counter revolutionaries'. The Constitution ultimately forced the King into outright opposition of the Revolution and pushed him to make his ill fated escape attempted. The Constitution forced fellow citizens to choose; to declare themselves publicly for or against the new order.

FLIGHT TO VARENNES

Louis' Flight to Varennes made it clear that he was an enemy of the Revolution and had been for some time (from the declaration which he left). The Flight also seemed to provide proof of long held fears of an aristocratic conspiracy and undermined the whole credibility of the Constitutional Monarchy. After the Flight Louis' reputation and authority plummeted as it was felt the Monarch could no longer be trusted. It was only after the Flight to Varennes that there was a big rise in calls for a Republic.

OUTBREAK OF WAR

The French army fighting in the war was far from ready and revolutionary propaganda had ruined the discipline of the regular army and new volunteers were poorly trained. In April 1792 they were faced with determined opposition and a panicked army retreated, while some whole units deserted. French failures were blamed on the traitors of the revolution, in particular the royal family. It was believed they wanted to see France defeated and back power from a weakened France. It was proven Marie Antionette had sent French military plans to Austria.

ACTIONS OF THE RADICALS

Success of radical journalists such as Marat. Developed a Revolutionary mentality. Attack on the Tuileries was led by the Cordeliers which showed the weakness of the King and the growing power of the sections.

WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION

Food shortage in the capital, crowd of women stormed the Hotel de Ville demanding bread. They were persuaded to march to Versailles to put their complaints to the King and National Assembly. October Days.

